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UMM joins other Minnesota colleges in receiving NSF grant

Summary: The University of Minnesota, Morris, along with 15 other Minnesota colleges and universities led by the University of Minnesota, has received a \$2.45 million grant from the National Science Foundation to help increase the number of under-represented minority students who complete undergraduate degrees in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

(September 19, 2007)-A statewide alliance of 16 colleges and universities led by the University of Minnesota, along with the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Minnesota High Tech Association, announced September 19 that it will receive a \$2.45 million grant over the next five years from the National Science Foundation (NSF) to participate in NSF's Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation program -- a federal education initiative aimed at increasing the number of under-represented minorities who complete baccalaureate degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields of study.

NSF's Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation initiative now covers 37 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Since its inception, minority enrollment in science, technology, engineering and mathematics programs at more than 450 participating institutions has increased from 35,670 in 1991 to more than 205,000 in 2003. Annually almost 25,000 baccalaureate degrees are conferred to minority students as a result of this federal initiative.

The primary goal of the Minnesota alliance in the next five years is to double the number of baccalaureate degrees earned by minority groups that are historically under-represented in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These specifically include African American, Hispanic/Latino American, and Native American students.

"We welcome all students to science and engineering programs, but it is especially critical that we focus our efforts on the students of the future," said Thomas Sullivan, senior vice president for academic affairs and provost at the University of Minnesota. "As minority populations grow in this country, we need to ensure that we welcome and plan for this diversity in our science and engineering programs."

The Minnesota alliance, named the North Star STEM Alliance, will focus its efforts on the critical transition points for students including high school to first year of college, from two-year colleges to four-year colleges, from lower division baccalaureate programs to specific STEM majors, and from a baccalaureate degree to STEM graduate study. The alliance's objectives are as follows:

- increase the level of interest in STEM careers by secondary and postsecondary students in the targeted population
- increase the number of students in the targeted population completing a college preparatory/STEM preparatory high school program
- increase the number of high school seniors of the targeted population enrolling in alliance pre-college STEM and STEM baccalaureate degree programs and
- increase the number of students from the targeted population completing an associate's degree and transferring to the four-year alliance schools while increasing the number of students from the targeted population who persist to

completion of a STEM baccalaureate degree.

The North Star STEM Alliance will provide comprehensive, long-term initiatives to address these objectives at the critical transition points. The initiatives will include alliance-wide community building conferences, programs to help students bridge from high school to college and university programs, peer-to-peer learning, undergraduate research opportunities, industry internships and professional development, and college prep science and engineering courses in high schools.

"We are certainly pleased to announce the new Minnesota Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (LSAMP) program, and to add it to our portfolio of 38 other such alliances, from New York to California and Alaska to Puerto Rico," said Art Hicks, NSF's program director for the Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation. "This is a great opportunity to partner with the state of Minnesota to increase the potential for students to participate in the science and engineering enterprise, especially students from under-represented minority groups. Through this program we can reach broadly for the talent America needs. You never know where the next Nobel Prize laureate will come from."

Hicks, Sullivan and several Minnesota education officials including Susan Heegaard, director of the Minnesota Office of Higher Education, Sally Wherry, supervisor for high school initiatives in the Minnesota Department of Education, and representatives from the alliance institutions made the announcement about the new alliance September 19 at the Science Museum of Minnesota.

Members of the North Star STEM Alliance include: University of Minnesota-Twin Cities (lead institution), University of Minnesota-Duluth, University of Minnesota, Morris, Augsburg College, Carleton College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Macalester College, St. Olaf College, Metropolitan State University, Minnesota State University, Mankato, St. Cloud State University, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College, Anoka-Ramsey Community, College Century College, Minneapolis Community and Technical College, North Hennepin Community College, Science Museum of Minnesota and the Minnesota High Tech Association (MHTA).

Through personal and academic discovery, the University of Minnesota, Morris provides opportunities for students to grow intellectually, engage in community, experience environmental stewardship and celebrate diversity. A renewable and sustainable educational experience, Morris prepares graduates for careers, for advanced degrees, for lifelong learning, for work world flexibility in the future, and for global citizenship. Learn more about Morris at morris.umn.edu or call 888-866-3382.